

BEVERLY EAVES PERDUE
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N.C. Lands Joint Strike Fighters, Perdue Applauds Victory after Intense Lobbying Efforts

RALEIGH - Gov. Bev Perdue today applauded the announcement that North Carolina will be the new home of 128 new Joint Strike Fighter jets. Perdue has spent years, both as Lt. Governor and as Governor, lobbying Pentagon and congressional leaders to base the F-35B planes at the Marine Corps Air Station in Cherry Point. Today's announcement comes as welcome news to the most military friendly state in the nation.

"I have long been a supporter of our military communities, and I will always work to bring smart investments of money, people or equipment to the military installations we are so proud of here in North Carolina," said Perdue. "Growth for the Marine Base means more jobs for the people of Cherry Point. It's a win-win for the entire community."

"Whether they roll down the runway or hover to a landing, I will look forward to the first Joint Strike Fighter landing at the base," she said. "Until then, we will continue to work to ensure that the Joint Strike Fighter program proceeds as planned and is not shortchanged. We want North Carolina to get the maximum economic benefit from the squadrons – and to remind the Corps that they will always have a home in Cherry Point."

Perdue met on numerous occasions with leaders in the Defense Department and Congress over the past two years urging them to base squadrons of the new aircraft at Cherry Point to replace aging Harrier jets currently used by the Marine Corps. The F-35B is one of three versions of the aircraft planned for the Marines, Navy and Air Force. Perdue drew on her long experience on military issues, having led the state's successful efforts to prevent any North Carolina base closing in the 2005 round of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission, and having represented the military-heavy New Bern area as a state legislator. She also created the N.C. Military Foundation, a business development organization focused exclusively on growing the state's defense economy. The privately funded organization has worked with state leaders on the F-35 efforts.